

Many fruit trees are cultivated in the gardens round the towns; and cucumbers, gourds, water melons, and melons are in abundance.

The grass is eaten by the horses.

The greatest part of the country is uncultivated and uninhabited; but beautiful plains are to be met with. The most beautiful and fertile spot is on the banks of the Onet-Mina.

The winter is rainy. The excessive heat of the summer quickly dries up the rivulets, and the waters which cover the plains.

The nights are always very cool and damp. In my opinion this dampness and cold are very unfavourable to the cultivation of sugar, cotton, coffee, indigo, etc.; these colonial productions, at the most, would only grow on the sea coast, and in a few of the plains.

The climate of this country has a great similarity to that of the southern provinces of France, where we see lofty mountains, the summits of which are covered with snow even during the hottest part of the summer.

In the mountains the temperature is very severe.

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The Arabs are subject to rheumatic pains in consequence of the damp and cold.

In our journey from Miliana to Blida, we passed through a wood of magnificent olive trees. They might obtain a great quantity of oil in this country.

CHILDREN IN FICTION.

There is a vast difference between children in fiction and fictitious children. It would almost seem, in considering literature as a whole, that until modern days we had never had the former at all. Children's appearances in fiction may be sub-divided into two headings—children in literature and children in children's books. In former days, before growth and evolution and heredity and environment were the common catch phrases in the mouths of men, children were not introduced into literature any more than they were into the lives of their elders. The classics are almost childless—Homer has one little boy, Hector's son; Shakespeare has two—Arthur and the son of Hermione, Mamillius. Corneille (or is it Racine) has the little king Josiah, but these are children whom the force of circumstances drove into prominence—they are in no sense carefully-drawn children's characters; even Arthur, the most lifelike, is far too fond of metaphysical soliloquy. Even in what we may call more modern classics children are always spoken of from the "grown-up" point of view. Charlotte Brontë makes Jane Eyre describe her childhood, and bitter reading it is; but they are childish woes as remembered through added years, and her little pupil, the dancer's daughter, is sketched rather than drawn. The girls in "Villette," too, are described only from the teacher's point of view. George Elliot, who was nothing if not analytical, has drawn one marvellous picture of child life—Maggie Tulliver, but it was to show us the causes of her maturer character. Before considering the changed attitude of more modern writers, let us look at the old fashioned books about children *for* children. Dear Goody Twoshoes! Strange as she now seems, the childlike heart of Goldsmith drew a real child there; but genius is free from the limitations of its age. But oh, the books of our great-grandmothers! We have them reprinted now, and chuckle over them; but think of girls who would now be enjoying Herrick, or Tennyson, or Kipling, or Stevenson in

"Lyra Heroica," or the "Child's Garden of Verse" brought up on this—a choice specimen from the "Daisy" or the "Cowslip"—! (Caroline declines her blue sash.)

"I wont! I wont!" shrieked Caroline;
 "I'll have my pretty pink!"
 "Papa, who from the parlour heard
 "Her make this noise and rout,
 "That instant ran to Caroline
 "To whip her, there's no doubt!"

They were days of violence met by violence, and yet people talk of the good old times! And the stories tell us of children whose crimes and whose virtues are "a penny plain and twopence coloured!" Miss Edgworth's "Moral Tales" come to my memory—Susan, who was polite and said, "Take a 'poon pig" to the porker who stole her supper, and the "rich attorney's daughter" who was rude to her. Somehow or other in old stories it is always wicked to be rich. "Anna Ross, or the Orphan of Waterloo," is another hoary children's classic. Anna is alternately holy and frightfully naughty, and all her rich relations and their attendant wickednesses lie on her soul like lead, and she chooses happiness with poorer ones, all accompanied by fortifying prayers and hymns; and this, though plain obvious duty to our modern eyes, would seem to have dictated her staying with the former. "Holiday House" is still enjoyed, because natural high spirits and many details as to food are described—two ways of pandering to youthful taste which have since been much exploited. Harry and Laura are mischievous and fairly natural, the pious Frank and his latter end (described in detail from his rash act to the arrival of the milkman in his last hour), are of a morbid and depressing nature, which we should now consider most unsuitable for children's reading. Of boys' books of the past I cannot speak with full knowledge. Marryat's tales were, as I remember them, chiefly directed to the old British instinct to run away to sea; and Captain Mayne Reid dealt in blood and scalps and prairies, but they did not describe children.

"Frank Farleigh" speaks of boys at a tutor's—they were too "genteel" in those days to all go to school. Apparently a boy then was simply a man in miniature, and had the same vices well developed. Coming down a little later we strike a

rich vein of "boys' school" books. First stands the immortal "Tom Brown"—a piece of real life, as true of boy nature to-day as it was then; though the brutality has been a good deal civilized away, and the piety, where it may still be found, is not so much talked over. Then come those distinctly "precious" books "Eric," and "St. Winifred's." Any healthy boy who lives to-day laughs them to scorn! Boys were, according to these books, either criminals or holy prigs—the amount of evil, emotion, early death, and repentant prayer which is crammed into them is totally foreign to the average boy's nature or experience.

I have not yet touched upon the immortal "Fairchild Family," for it is difficult to dissect. The children are almost real: Lucy, Emily and Henry are and were dear to many children who did not realize the appalling mistakes in their up-bringing, and who cheerfully skipped the prayers and hymns.

But this brings us at last to the failure which attended almost all efforts to describe children in former times. The writers could not and would not forget that they must point a moral to adorn a tale, and thus chose not characters but types as their *dramatis personæ*, and then heightened the natural colours of these to enhance the effect, till nature was forgotten and only the pattern good girl or the stock bad boy represented.

The laws of modern science, the recognition of the force of personality, and the alteration of the methods of education have utterly changed our point of view, both of childhood and of its place in life. We no longer consciously and deliberately "despise," "offend," and hinder "these little ones," and congratulate ourselves all the time on the doing of our plain duty. So we no longer shut children out of our lives, except when we are condescending to them from a height; nor do we think and write of them as if they were a separate species.

Of the modern books about children for children, and their name is legion, there are the noble army of Mrs. Molesworth's creations; and dear "Stumps," another natural book which we love long after we see how ridiculous much of it is. Lewis Carroll's "Alice" is beloved not only for its weird imaginings, but because Alice is a true child—

she has a child's relentless logic and desire to question into detail.

But most of the notable children in modern fiction are to be found in books which will be most enjoyed by grown men and women, though they may not primarily have been intended for them. Mrs. Ewing's books are wonderful in their intuition into child mind and character; but many children's tastes are not educated enough to face apparent sorrow, and so they are not always popular. Jackanapes, who "sat upon the pond and it wouldn't hold me," and Jack Marsh, who picked the whole garden full of flowers to find the red bergamot; and the dear child who stood before the mirror in "Six to Sixteen," mincing and grimacing and repeating "Charmed to see you, I'm sure!"—how true they all are to nature! "The Story of a Short Life" is a perfect book *about* a child (not *for* a child); it shows the comprehension of child character which only love can give.

The difference between children in fiction even twenty years ago and to-day is strikingly illustrated by two books on practically the same topic—"Elizabeth's Children" and "Helen's Babies." The latter has become a classic: everybody knows Budge and Toddy who "wanted to see the wheels go round;" the former is hot from the printing press. The two children in "Helen's Babies" get through a series of contretemps and adventures amusing or aggravating according to your taste; and the ultimate result is to bring the Uncle and his "Lady fair" together. So in "Elizabeth's Children;" but in the old book the children are pegs on which to hang incidents, and Budge and Toddy are hewn out of the same block. In "Elizabeth's Children" the two quaint, little Anglo-French people are *characters*; "Arnauld" is very different from his brother, and both develop during the book.

The old-fashioned fairy story for children, such as Knatchbull Hugesson's Tales, punished the greedy boy by keeping him in the giant's larder, &c. Compare this with E. Nesbitt's "Five Children and It;" those five children are personages. So, too, in "The Would-be Goods," it is all quite possible and true to nature. "Oswald was always a noble boy" is written in the third person, and the rest of the narrative (told by Oswald) in the first!

Then the modern school story is hardly moral! "Stalkey and Co." may be denounced by a few boys, but mostly they acknowledge the truth, and "gloat" over the delicious sins depicted in it.

Novels are more often with children than without them in these days. "The Heavenly Twins" has some very startling youthful passages; and Henry James' "What Masie Knew," is a very terrible criticism of life from a child's point of view.

Miss Ethel Turner's stories of child life in Australia are also most sympathetic, and the little people are real, though some of the incidents would be utterly impossible in England. There are also the sketches by Kenneth Graham called "In the Golden Age" and "Dream Days," which have that insight into the child's point of view which authors seem only lately to have attained. The children whose bonfire of rejoicing over the departure of their governess is drowned by tears for the very same cause, should be read about—they are worth it.

Then there are those popular persons "Little Lord Fountleroy" and "Sarah Carew;" the former is rather unreal and theatrical, perhaps because he has been so much acted, and the same criticism applies to "Bottles Baby"—they belong to passing literary fashions rather than to life.

To sum up: children's stories for children are no longer simply "cautionary." "Rosamond and her Purple Jar" have passed away, and Mougli and the Jungle reign in his stead, nor does morality lose by the change. It is better to keep the Jungle law and hate Sheer Khan than to feel consumed with unavowed and sneaking pity for Rosamond with her empty jar and worn-out slippers.

Whether it is wise to let children read "children's books" is a moot point, but this is no place for its discussion. But it most undoubtedly is good for "grown-ups" to read of real children if only as a means of gaining that sympathy and insight which does not come naturally even to parents. The want of the power to see things from a child's point of view is a serious matter, for somehow or other we none of us get through life without being brought into contact with the next generation. The teaching of Christianity which exalted the candour and the "single eye" of childhood is at last

attaining the recognition which, on that point, it was so long denied; and we ought to rejoice that there are so many writers to guide our stumbling feet, lest we too should earn for ourselves the "mill stones" around our necks, and lose ourselves in seas of uncomprehending egoism.

POETRY CLUB MINUTES.

On Saturday, April 15th, the Poetry Club held its first meeting for the term. There was a good attendance, and the Juniors were very eager to learn what our Club was and what were its objects. The meeting began by some of the members reading selections from "The Mind and Art of Shakespeare," by Dowden. Short passages about Shakespeare's life were also read, and were followed by selections from "The Tempest."

April 29th.—Our subject this Saturday was Milton, especially "Paradise Lost," and our evening was a very successful one. There was a good attendance, and all profited by hearing a short and interesting account of Milton's life. This was followed by readings of the favourite passages of the various members, among which was that part of Book III. of Paradise Lost beginning "Hail Holy Light." Selections from Books I. and IV. were also read. "Il Penseroso" and "Allegro" were much enjoyed, and also Milton's Sonnet on his blindness, beginning "When I consider how my days are spent."

May 13th.—Our evening on Lowell went off very well. The President read a short account of his life, and then several pieces of his poetry were read, "The Vision of Sir Launfal" first, as that was the chosen one; then one of the Biglow Papers, "Yussouf," "To a Dandelion," "To a Pine Tree," and others. It was a most enjoyable evening, and there was a fairly good attendance.

June 9th.—Our evening on Robert Browning was a most delightful one. One of the members gave a brief and inter-

esting account of the poet's life, and it was followed by a short discussion about his family and the places which he visited. The President read several of his poems, among which were "Andrea del Sarto" and "Fra Lippi," which were much appreciated. Some of his shorter poems were also read.

PROGRAMME FOR NEXT TERM.

- Oct. 8. Wordsworth.
- „ 22. Keble.
- Nov. 5. Hood.
- „ 19. Shakespeare, especially his Sonnets.
- Dec. 3. William Morris, especially "Earthly Paradise."
- „ 17. Byron, especially "Childe Harold."